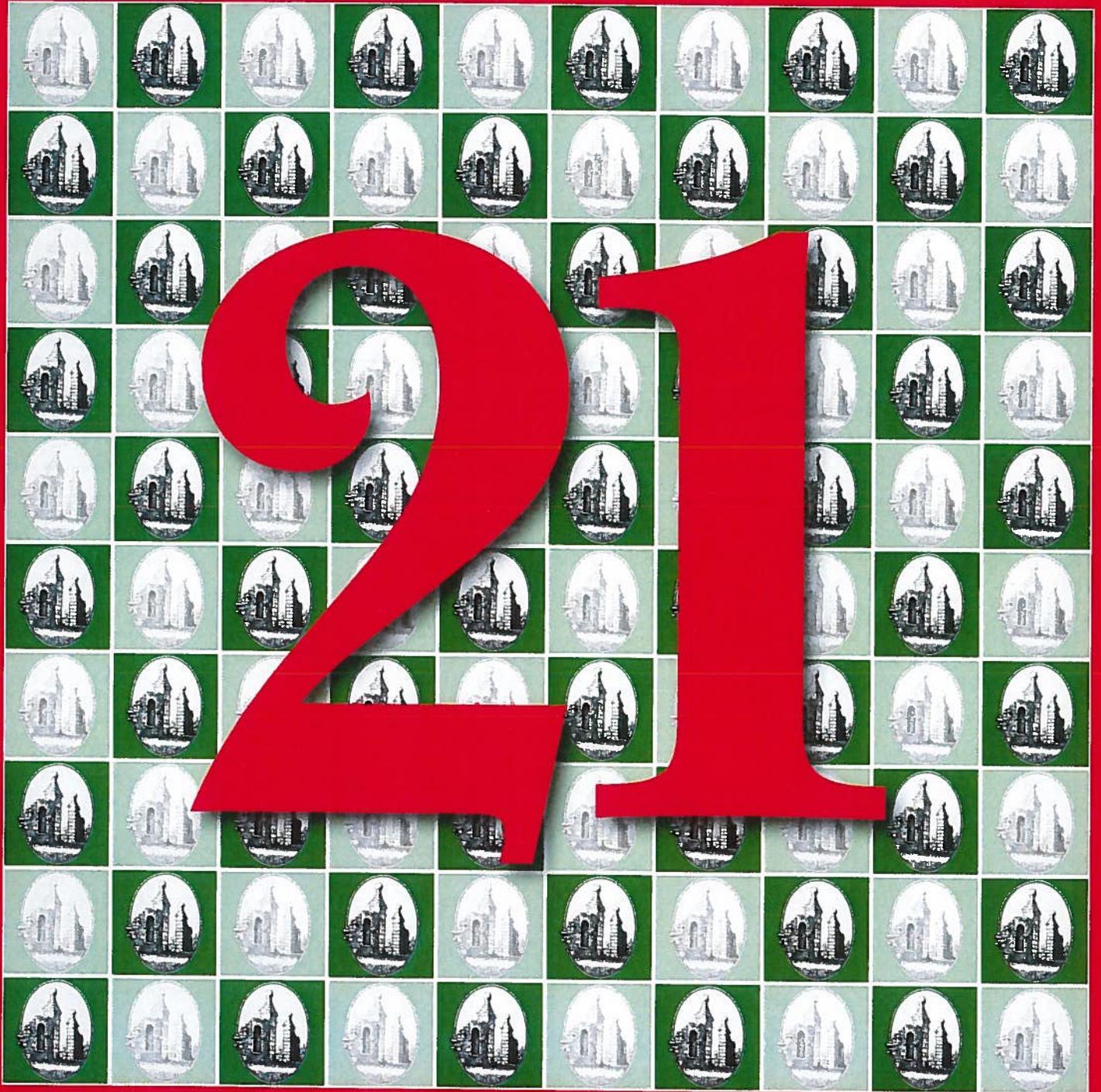


# *the* BULLETIN

WELSH HISTORIC GARDENS TRUST YMDDIRIEDOLAETHI GERDDI HANESYDDOL CYMRU No. LX Spring 2011



## SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

## from THE EDITOR

I never cease to be surprised that it was as long ago as 1858 that late-night opening was first introduced at the South Kensington Museum, today's Victoria and Albert Museum. This initiative was the brainchild of the museum's first director, Henry Cole, and was made possible by the installation of gas lighting to the museum. It arose, however, not from scientific advances, but from Cole's belief that art and culture, as enshrined in the museum's collections, must be universally available. Cole had taken soundings 'to ascertain practically what hours are most convenient to the working classes' and tailor-made a solution to the problem.

Latter-day commentators may dismiss Cole's characteristically 'Victorian' approach to arts philanthropy, with its emphasis on class distinctions. But Cole's belief that art and beauty enrich the soul and can touch each of us, regardless of background or affiliation, remains an exhilarating thought.

It does, of course, have a flipside. In asserting that the museum's treasures must be available to all callers, Cole helped take the effort out of connoisseurship. This in turn engendered a distinctively British approach to what we now term heritage, namely that the triumphs of the past exist willy-nilly, independent of our regard, concern or husbandry of them. We are fortunate in this country in enjoying a history so rich that we can entertain an illusion that we are able to take it for granted. But illusion it is and taking the past for granted is the first step towards its erosion.

As we celebrate 21 years of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, we know at first hand the fragility of the past. Historical survival is a capricious business. All too often it requires a very great deal of effort indeed. Much of that effort is small in scale and limited in its apparent rewards. Looking back at the Trust's achievements since 1990, we are reassured that no effort is ever wholly in vain and that the work of bodies like ours adds immeasurably to the richness of life in these islands.

I hope that you enjoy this anniversary issue of *The Bulletin*. It seems appropriate to launch our new twelve-page format with this celebratory overview of the Trust's achievements since its inception. Several of the articles you will find here pinpoint the great efforts made by many Trust members to secure those ends the Trust holds dear. Others, like Jean Reader's report on the visit of the South & Mid Glamorgan branch to the Prince of Wales's garden at Highgrove and Olive Horsfall's account of the Gwynedd branch's Traditional Orchards Study Day, illustrate the interest and pleasure membership of the Trust brings to so many.

Looking back must encourage us to look forward. Let us embark on the next 21 years of the WHGT with a sense of hope and pride – and a clear-headed recognition that the invaluable work of the Trust, impossible without your dedication and expertise, demands a flourishing membership and healthy finances.

MATTHEW DENNISON

## from THE CHAIRMAN

This *Bulletin* celebrates the twenty-first year of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust's existence. At a time of great change and difficulty for such organisations, the Trust's survival is in itself a cause for celebration. Its strength is in no small way the result of the determination of the founders and of subsequent chairmen, who worked so hard to ensure that the Trust was sufficiently strong to carry out its core purpose of raising the profile and ensuring the preservation of historic gardens and landscapes in Wales. Twenty-one years ago, there was little general interest in such gardens and, as William Wilkins points out in this issue, there was faint understanding of their importance in official circles. Many of the triumphs of the Trust are outlined in the article written by Ros Laidlaw which accompanies this *Bulletin*; indeed many gardens of historic interest have been saved as a result of Ros's vigilance and swift action. It is a source of much relief that she is now in charge of our Planning Conservation Group, which includes representatives from each branch. It is important to note here the important role of our branches in responding to planning threats; in truth I am in awe of the swiftness and vigour of their response.

Naturally the Trust cannot rest on its laurels. There is still much work to be done, but through interesting study days, garden visits and lectures, we continue to promote the Trust's aims. Our membership is growing and our central administration has been reinforced. Under the rigorous guidance of our Treasurer, John Borron, our finances are in a far healthier state, which enables us to plan for the future more confidently. My thanks in particular go to the many members and private donors who have given so generously to the Trust in recent months. These donations have been placed in the Fighting Fund, which will enable us to respond quickly to any major threats to historic Welsh gardens in future. In recent years we have been very fortunate to receive generous financial support from NFU Mutual and, until very recently, similar support from CCW. I am assured that CCW will continue to support our cause whenever it is able.

However, no organisation can be without some areas of dissatisfaction. The end of The Gateway Gardens Trust which had grown out of the WHGT was extremely sad, as it represented a toweringly worthy cause, providing interest for some of the most vulnerable people in our society. I am also saddened by the fact that we are no longer able to produce our *Guide to the Parks and Gardens of Wales*, originally supported by a group of charitable bodies. It would be very nice to think that we could find some way of recreating that guide as it was so popular. Suggestions, please?

My very best wishes to you all and I hope to see as many of you as possible at our AGM on 4 July.

GWYNETH HAYWARD

## IN THE BEGINNING

### WILLIAM WILKINS remembers the origins of the Trust

In some ways the foundation of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust could be laid at the door of my late aunt, Rose Powell. It was she who 'discovered' the remains of Sir William Paxton's great pleasure grounds at Middleton Hall or, I should say, made the bridge between the Dyfed Wildlife Trust's walk in the woods and the existence of an important eighteenth-century landscape relict. Encouraging me to go and look at it, she stimulated a desire to save what remained and to understand more fully what had been.

The Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, which was formed at a public meeting in Llandeilo in the summer of 1990, arose from visits which I organised initially for various friends and acquaintances to the parkland and garden remains at Middleton and Aberglasney. The original intention was to set up a Towy Valley gardens trust to concentrate on saving what we could of those two places. But we were persuaded to cast our net more widely and thus had the temerity to set up a Wales-wide trust offering, as it were, a tent for anyone else interested in historic gardens.

In the early days there were three priorities: to find a means of saving specific, threatened historic landscapes; to acquire much greater knowledge of the historic garden heritage of Wales and, finally, to make government aware of the value of that heritage in both cultural and economic terms.

The means of saving threatened gardens proved to be quite straightforward in principle – set up specific 'sub' trusts – but in practice it proved to be extremely arduous. Arduous because the particular circumstances of each landscape were so different. The first to be set up was at Hafod, where substantial seedcorn funding was offered by an anonymous benefactor if we could get the Forestry Commission to agree a deal. It did so, thereby creating what it told me was the first partnership into which it had entered with the

voluntary sector. Middleton, later to become The National Botanic Garden of Wales, followed and was based initially on the exemplary enthusiasm of the county council, Dyfed, and of many smaller councils, particularly Carmarthen Borough Council. Finally, we were able to tackle Aberglasney (pictured below) with seedcorn, and then much subsequent funding, from Frank and Anne Cabot's Quatre Vents Foundation.

One other restoration project is a source of great pleasure to me. After years of struggle, my friend, and former chief executive of the WHGT, Michael Norman, is finally making good progress at Penllergare, once again with the active support of the WHGT.

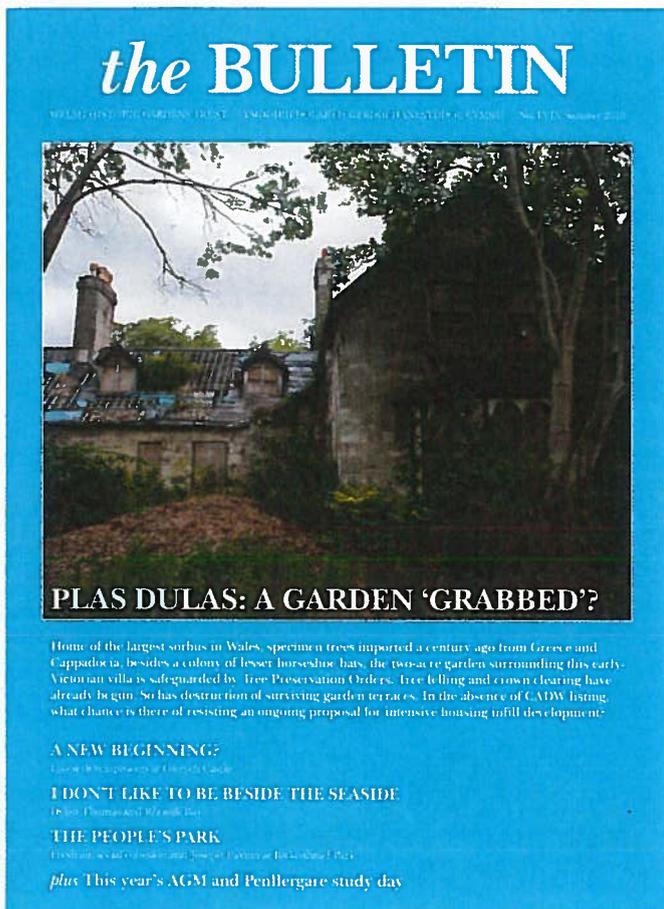
The second priority, to achieve much greater knowledge of the historic gardens of Wales, was very rapidly achieved. We held a wonderfully attended conference at Lampeter in late summer 1991, ICOMOS became involved and pressure was put on CADW to resume work on its register. Above all, enthusiasts brought their knowledge from all over Wales. One of the most dramatic results of this was that, within a year of the formation of the trust, the list of the six commonly regarded historic gardens of Wales had grown to something much more like 306.

Government was a different kettle of fish. At that time the word 'garden' did not exist in the Wales Tourist Board strategy. It took much time and lobbying, and half a page in *The New York Times*, for the notion that gardens might represent an asset to creep into government circles. Now, of course, they play a recognised part in both national and local government strategies for tourism and economic development. In this, as in all aspects of the Trust's focus, we have come a long way in 21 years.



## PRINTED MATTERS

Publications are an important aspect of the Trust's work. Here, former editor ANNE CARTER traces the history of *The Bulletin*.



In the beginning there was the Newsletter. This was the Trust's first publication for members and to some extent it belied its name, for it contained more scholarly articles than news. The editor, R. R. Rockingham Gill, spread his net widely and the little grey A5 volumes were packed with material of impressive range and depth, covering Hafod, Penllergaer, Middleton and many more. But as the Trust grew and its branches developed, the need for a more frequent, informal contact became apparent and so, in the spring of 1992, *The Bulletin* was born.

Early issues contain information about the still new Museum of Garden History, links with The Victorian Society and advice about Public Liability Insurance, as well as articles on planning and conservation, details of branch activities and quirky items on garden ornaments, historic plants and laburnum hedges in Wales. There were advertisements and a short-lived attempt at small ads which included one person seeking cast-iron greenhouse arches and another wanting wives for peacocks. The tone was chatty, friendly and without pomposity, but the seriousness of the Trust's aims and the vast untapped wealth of Welsh garden history was never left in doubt. The work which led in due course to the formation of the Hafod Trust, in which WHGT played a leading part, was well documented and a pattern of leading articles about individual gardens began to develop. Penny David wrote about Falcondale in 1994, Bettina Harden on Glynllifon in '95 and Patricia Moore on

Insole Court in 2001, to name only a few. Public parks were not forgotten, a very much needed highlight at a time when money and maintenance were fast disappearing. Patricia Moore sent out a warning and a plea for information in 1994. Three years later, Barry Thomas gave a nostalgic glimpse of the Windsor Gardens at Penarth in their heyday and, by 2008, John Woods presented us with the inspiring vision of a full restoration of Mawson's Bellevue Park in Newport.

With only eight pages to play with and a good deal of necessary information to be included, scope for dramatic layout and striking pictures was limited in the early days. *The Bulletin* was produced on a shoestring. The paper quality was not great and some of the pictures truly awful but the feeling was lively and much of the writing distinguished so that by and large the magazine fulfilled its brief to increase communication, make it easier for members to participate in Trust activities and stimulate growth. Time and technology moved on. The Newsletter had ceased to be and the Trust's heavyweight journal, *Gerddi*, was infrequent, so that to some extent the duties of the former publication devolved on *The Bulletin*, which became home to some more substantial pieces. Yet it remained, under successive editors, what it had set out to be: a magazine for members, informative, popular and a good advertisement.

The early Nineties seem a long time ago now. The baby Trust has come of age and is working hard to take its place in the grown-up world. Publications are a part of that. But thanks to a climate of austerity, financial backing is tighter than it has ever been. *The Bulletin* needs to do all that it has done in the past and more. If it is to match the magazines produced by comparable organizations, then the quart of design, presentation and, above all, content, must be squeezed into the pint pot of practicality. It is a formidable task and I, in common with all Trust members, wish it well.

Anne Carter edited *The Bulletin* from 1993 to 1997.

## Top Tips from NFU Mutual

British winters continue to surprise us, from warm and wet to bitterly cold and dry. Having recently experienced one of the longest, most severe cold spells the country has known, be aware of the increased risk of burst pipes and fires and don't get caught out. Make sure:

- pipes are adequately lagged
- lofts are well insulated
- you leave heating on low if you are going to be away for any length of time
- your chimney has been swept recently
- you don't leave candles burning unattended

For more information and tips on protecting your home in winter, visit [www.nfumutual.co.uk/lifestyle](http://www.nfumutual.co.uk/lifestyle)



## from the BRANCHES

### HILARY THOMAS applauds the work of Trust branches across Wales.

The establishment, aims and activities of the WHGT throughout Wales are effectively outlined by other contributors to this celebratory issue of *The Bulletin*. This is a 'view from the ground' (for 'ground' read 'garden' throughout?) from one of the branches whose work underpins that of the central Trust. Each branch faces its own local challenges in monitoring planning issues, in drawing attention to gardens at risk and in making the wider public aware of the rich diversity of historic gardens in Wales.

The South and Mid Glamorgan Branch was established in 1992 and some founder members continue to be actively involved today. As each branch will tell, such commitment demands stamina and enthusiasm in equal measure as we meet the challenges presented by historic gardens. This brief account of the activities of one branch is typical of all the branches: we all do what we can to the best of our abilities and resources.

So what have the committee and branch members been doing in South and Mid Glamorgan? In the context of planning we have endeavoured to establish links with the planning authorities in our area to make them aware of our concerns (and 'historic' knowledge). In some cases, notably in the long-running saga of Ruperra and the more recent controversy over access to Bute Park (readers of earlier issues of *The Bulletin* will have been kept up to date with these issues), we have played a significant role in opposing inappropriate developments. We have also maintained close links with Dyffryn Gardens as work on reinstating the Mawson gardens progresses.

It has been encouraging when our advice has been sought by garden owners, among them the owners of Miskin Manor, now a hotel, wishing to reinstate the Edwardian gardens around the house, and the Friends of the Nantgarw Pottery Museum, who wished to establish an 'artisan's garden' adjacent to the main building. When the Italian Garden was being recreated at the Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans, to mark the new millennium, a member of our branch liaised with the museum throughout the project.

Over the years WHGT and its branches have organised a number of very successful day schools at various venues around Wales. In 2001, the theme was Glasshouses, the venue St Fagans; the organisation was undertaken by the South and Mid Glamorgan Branch – an exhausting but very satisfying experience for us all.

One of the earliest commitments made by our branch was to identify, survey and record 'minor' gardens not considered sufficiently significant for inclusion in the Cadw/ICOMOS Register, and over the years we have honoured this commitment. In 1993, we undertook a pioneering survey of the 'almost lost' garden at The Court, St Fagans, a garden associated with Gertrude Jekyll, and further surveys have included Ash Hall in Ystradowen and Brocastle near Bridgend.

The example of our friends in the Ceredigion Branch galvanised us into producing a book, *Historic Gardens in the Vale of Glamorgan*. Published in 2007 this, like its Ceredigion companion, has helped to raise the public profile both of historic gardens in Wales and the Trust.

Common to all branches are regular committee meetings, the devising of programmes of events and visits for our members, production of a branch Newsletter and the often dispiriting attempts to enrol new members. The WHGT website (first set up and managed by one of our members) is a vital link with the public; locally we reinforce that message by lecturing to various societies and organisations.

Every so often one particular issue (often with planning implications) will make exceptional demands upon our time and talents. Perhaps a short blast on this branch's trumpet may be permissible as we record one such dominant project, the Cowbridge Physic Garden, which owes its origin and early development to the chairman and committee of the South and Mid Glamorgan Branch.

The work of all the branches over the past twenty-one years has been undertaken by many individuals, but particular mention must be made of our chairmen who have led, encouraged and inspired us to 'get things done'. This is the continuing challenge which faces every aspect of the Trust – one to which its branch members will certainly continue to rise.

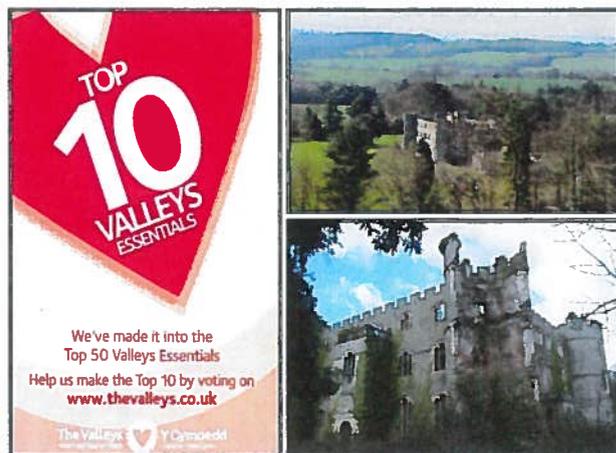
*Below: the fate of Ruperra Castle has concerned members of the South & Mid Glamorgan branch.*

**VOTE FOR RUPERRA CASTLE!**

### Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust

Hooray! Ruperra Castle has been chosen by Mike Parker author of the Rough Guide as one of top 50 Essential places to visit in the South Wales Valleys.

Vote to put it in to the Top10. please visit [www.thevalleys.co.uk/site/top-50/vote-for-your-favourite](http://www.thevalleys.co.uk/site/top-50/vote-for-your-favourite) to place your vote!



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## PICTURESQUE PARADISE

### JENNIE MACVE celebrates the role of the WHGT in the revival of Hafod.

In the decades preceding the foundation of the Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, such public interest in Hafod as existed tended more to the nostalgic than the practical. There was a sense that it was beyond rescue, perhaps derived in part from *Peacocks in Paradise*, Elisabeth Inglis-Jones's romantic biography of Thomas Johnes. Published in 1950 but re-issued several times and widely read, it described a lost Paradise, ending with doom-laden words: "...adverse fate... hovered darkly... then... descended vulture-like upon its prey and picked it clean". Such gloomy prognostications were reinforced in the Fifties and Sixties by the demolition of the derelict house and the planting of much of the landscape – stripped almost bare in the Forties – with commercial, non-native trees, mostly conifers.

This perception overlooked two things. We know from Thomas Johnes that the house was not intended to be the main attraction, as he complained of nosey visitors loitering about his rooms: "Such is the curiosity of the world to see a House, when nine in ten neglect to go through the walks which are worth seeing." And although architecturally interesting and very much of its time, his house had subsequently been truncated and sidelined by a huge Victorian extension. Secondly, there are worse fates that can befall an historic landscape than to be blanketed by new woodlands, however unsympathetic they may appear, among them road schemes, housing estates, reservoirs and divided ownership. Crucially, 70 acres of former lawn and meadow at the heart of the Hafod demesne had been preserved as pasture.

By 1990 a local voluntary group, the Friends of Hafod, had begun to raise awareness through its newsletter and was establishing what would become an extensive collection of historical documents; and the Forestry Commission (FC) had used Manpower Services Commission and other resources to repair the Bedford Monument, do some clearing and rebuilding in the two walled flower gardens, and lay out two circuit trails. A more ambitious, estate-wide project was waiting to happen. When an offer of £100,000 of private funding for Hafod was made, the founders of the newly created Welsh Historic Gardens Trust, much to their credit, seized the opportunity.

The first step was to commission a Conservation Strategic Plan (CSP) for Hafod. Produced in 1991, Dr Andrew Sclater's plan reviewed the known facts of the estate's history and its importance, assessed the current state of the landscape, and put forward restoration and management proposals. Despite the many surveys carried out and additional documentary sources traced since, the CSP remains in its scope and vision arguably the most impressive dossier to come out of the Hafod Project. In the following year, 1992, discussions between WHGT and Forestry Commission on collaboration at Hafod culminated in the signing of a Partnership Agreement on October 5.

The WHGT set up a working party to agree plans for initial works, with FC urging that the reinstatement of the main river crossing, the Alpine Bridge, be given priority. The

other major project selected was the restoration of the Lady's, or First, Walk. Both bridge and walk were to present significant challenges. The bridge had been rebuilt several times during its 200-year history, at different heights and in varying styles, none of them precisely documented. The design needed to reflect its past and be sensitive to its site at the heart of the designed landscape, while at the same time meeting the exacting standards of FC engineers. The Lady's Walk, described and sketchily mapped in its entirety by only one contemporary observer – George Cumberland – was not, it transpired, awaiting discovery as a feature of solid construction just below the turf. Although its route was readily identifiable when confined beside a stream, on open ground it was far more elusive, and traditional archaeology was of limited help in solving these questions of alignment. In addition, one school of thought held that, where the exact route was traceable, its intrinsic archaeological value was such that public interest would be best served by re-routing the restored walk to avoid it.

To assist in reaching decisions on these matters, the Forestry Commission set up a Hafod Advisory Committee. Work on both projects proceeded, with financial contributions from Cadw (for the Alpine Bridge), Environment Wales and CCW. By this stage Hafod was occupying ever larger amounts of the resources of the WHGT, a body still to an extent finding its feet and trying to engage with threatened or neglected gardens, large and small, throughout Wales. Michael Norman, Executive Officer, applied his organisational skills and heroic amounts of time to the WHGT, but it became clear that Hafod demanded its own dedicated body. Accordingly, in September 1994, the Hafod Trust was created, and the Partnership Agreement with FC re-assigned. Continuity of personnel enabled work to continue with little interruption. Projects conceived or started by the WHGT came to fruition in 1996: the Alpine Bridge completed; 5.2 km of walks opened to the public; the first Hafod Warden appointed; and the publication of the bicentenary edition of George Cumberland's *An Attempt to Describe Hafod*.

In the succeeding years the length of restored Johnesian walks has risen to 12 km, plus a further 3 km of other estate paths, involving the construction of ten footbridges. Other structures have been repaired, renewed or conserved, a comprehensive Sites and Monuments Record produced, historic views analysed and some 30 of these reinstated by selective felling and pruning. With detailed topographical and other surveys, Hafod is one of the best-documented sites in Wales, with a large collection of archive and project records, and a GIS system for maintaining survey data, held at the Estate Office. Funded by a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, the conversion in 2001 of the late-nineteenth-century stables to an office and meeting room brought life back to the heart of the estate and provided a new focal point, hard by the mansion ruins. At the present time, work is ongoing to recreate Mrs Johnes's Flower Garden, concurrent with the long-term task of realising the Forest Design Plan for the historic landscape.

Hafod is open to the public throughout the year and is a magnet both for scholarly aficionados of the Picturesque and for walkers and country-lovers to whom the landscape again speaks, as Johnes intended, without explanation.



For further information, visit [www.hafod.org](http://www.hafod.org)

Jennie Macve is the author of 'The Hafod Landscape: An Illustrated History and Guide'

## A BACKWARD GLANCE



### **WHGT President and former chairman TOM PRITCHARD celebrates the Trust's successful evolution.**

For twenty-one years the WHGT has promoted the conservation of our garden heritage in Wales with increasing success because many people have worked with enthusiasm and dedication to deliver the outcomes. They include the chairs and members of the executive committee, the county branches and other committees, editors of, and contributors to, our publications, many other members of the Trust and well-wishers outside. The task has become ever more challenging and complicated, and sometimes we fight vigorously as objectors to bad development schemes that would damage our heritage. In all this we must not forget the vital roles of those who own or manage our historic gardens. We have helped many of them to save their properties from decay or threats from outside, and I know they are grateful for our support.

I became involved with the Trust in its early days, soon after William Wilkins set up the charity. I followed him as chair of the executive committee and he urged me to establish an enduring organisational and administrative structure to support our work in the longer term. The task was not easy because the enthusiasts were scattered around Wales: in those early days, we needed more members to take part in the work. The need for strong county branches was important to enable the executive committee to strengthen the initiatives of local leaders.

I was followed by Bettina Harden, whose enthusiasm for opening gardens to the public, especially the disadvantaged and disabled, drew much admiration in Wales and beyond. Then, in the next six years, Michael Tree occupied the chair. He brought with him a wealth of practical and professional experience in the protection and management of heritage buildings and gardens. Gwyneth Hayward, who is in the chair at present, promotes the Trust's activities to a wide range of interests and potential supporters.

I have been president for much of the last decade following the sad death of Lord Morris of Castle Morris. Brian Morris was a prominent supporter of the Trust and we greatly missed his buoyant and articulate leadership.

Sir Roy Strong addressed our AGM four years ago. He was immensely impressed, particularly by the strength of our membership. Considering that Wales has a tiny proportion of the population of the UK, he thought the number of members we have a credit to the Trust. Having repeated what he said, I would add that we must continue to grow, and to find more young members. We have established ourselves as the key advisory body for conservation, management and use of garden heritage in Wales, and a priority task now is to use our expertise and dedication to support the Welsh Assembly Government, the local authorities and others who have the capacity to make decisions that affect the wellbeing of our heritage. The next twenty-one years should bring even greater success.

## STUDY DAY REPORT: TRADITIONAL ORCHARDS

The subject of our Study Day was chosen with the Year of Biodiversity in mind. Orchards are hotspots of diversity and support a wide range of plants and wildlife. Once a common sight within the landscape, the traditional orchard habitat is now under serious threat. The extent of traditional orchards in Wales has declined sharply since the middle of the last century.

We were very fortunate that one of our members, David Lea-Wilson, had the ideal venue for the occasion. His lovely Georgian house near Brynsiencyn on Anglesey, has an early-nineteenth-century walled garden with many old apple trees, and a restored barn complete with electricity. We were blessed with a wonderful sunny day, and the display of young apple trees either side of the entrance, supplied by local grower Ian Storrucks, really set the scene. As members arrived, they were encouraged by David to participate in the apple-pressing procedure at the back of the barn to produce juice to enjoy with our lunch. The apple peeler and slicer looked very Victorian but seemed to do the job, and several 'cheeses' – chopped apple wrapped in special sacking pieces – were under the press by the time we were all seated for the first speaker.

Simon Farr of the North Wales Wildlife Trust gave a most interesting talk, with an attractive PowerPoint presentation, explaining why the preservation of the orchard habitat is so important, providing as it does food and shelter for hundreds of species of wildlife. Simon used a picture of a spider's web to illustrate how the presence of the tree affects the interaction of so many interdependent species. Insects and butterflies are attracted by pollen, nectar and decaying wood; these in turn attract bird species. The birds also feed on the fruit, and small mammals and even badgers enjoy the windfalls. The rare noble chafer beetle is found almost entirely in traditional orchards where the larvae live inside decaying ancient fruit trees and take two years to develop into adult beetles. As old orchards become less economic and are grubbed up for more productive land use, noble chafers are just one species which has been affected. In the past, many historic gardens with orchards had bee boles. The loss of fruit trees is one factor in the bee's worrying decline. Many fungi are intolerant of modern agricultural chemicals and therefore thrive in traditionally managed orchards, as do wild flowers. Apparently the primrose is particularly plentiful in North Wales orchards. Hedgerows were also important and could provide wildlife corridors between orchards. The Wildlife Trust is organising many projects to promote traditional orchards and Simon was joining another 'Apple Day' in Clwyd that afternoon.

Our second speaker was Lesley Thomas from the Centre for Alternative Land Use, based at Bangor University. She explained that CALU delivers the Land Management programme on behalf of Farming Connect. Farming Connect and the Farming Advisory Service are funded by the Rural Development Plan for Wales, which is financed by the Welsh Assembly Government and the European Union. They host year-round events, talks, demonstrations and training days across Wales, all offered free of charge. Two of their current events are 'Orchard Management' and 'Winter Pruning of Fruit Trees'. Lesley had hoped to invite our members to these days but they are fully booked, which is a good indication of the level of interest in the subject. We



were promised notification of extra training days which would be held soon.

CALU is also involved in a joint venture with the Snowdonia National Park to promote rejuvenation and restoration of neglected orchards within the park. If you live within the park boundary, you can apply for a grant to plant fruit trees. Another initiative involved help for landowners with existing old trees. David said he was making an application but it involved a lot of paperwork. Lesley provided lots of leaflets and many felt they could take advantage of the services offered.

After a buffet lunch, David gave us a short history of the house and garden, and explained the apple-juice production procedure – from selecting the varieties to blend to pasteurising the filled bottles. We then went out into the sunshine to see the walled garden with old cordon apple trees, some with trunks 18 inches in diameter, and with splendidly gnarled branches.

Then we were back inside for our final talk from Glyn Smith, head gardener at the National Trust property Erddig. He talked about Erddig's orchard management programme and showed us pictures of the trees on the estate. Some old trees had grown very large, and most of the really old trees were in an area now used as a car park, which brought its problems. People complained of apples falling and damaging their cars! It was also difficult to pick fruit or prune trees when the car park was in use. Erddig grows over 100 varieties of apple on trees planted throughout the garden, while a new orchard has recently been established. Every October Glyn organises an Apple Festival, with a wonderful display of all the varieties, apple-pressing and cider-making, and other related activities. Such is the popularity of this event that some 6,000 people have visited in a single weekend. Glyn is a knowledgeable gardener and answered members' questions about pests, growing conditions and more. We hope to organise a Branch visit to Erddig next autumn.

People bought bottles of David's apple juice and drifted off home, but it was not the end of the programme. Ian Storrucks had been unable to join us as he was participating in an Apple Festival at Seiont Garden Centre near Caernarfon, so he kindly arranged to give a talk, 'Growing Apples Organically in North Wales', on Sunday morning. Several members joined other visitors at Seiont for a most interesting lecture. Altogether we had enjoyed a very good weekend.

*OLIVE HORSEFALL is Secretary of the Gwynedd branch.*

## GARDEN VISIT: HIGHGROVE



The inaugural meeting of the WHGT took place at much the same time as HRH the Prince of Wales began allowing groups to visit his Gloucestershire garden. The recent visit of a WHGT group to Highgrove gave cause for reflection on some of the ways in which our Patron's garden has changed during his ownership.

Visitors to Highgrove are welcomed in the Orchard Room where they are able to inspect photographs showing something of the appearance of the garden when the Duchy of Cornwall bought the estate in 1980 and the subsequent changes that have taken place. At about 350ft above sea level and with little in the way of a shelter belt, the estate appears to have been both windswept and unadorned. Admittedly there was a majestic Cedar of Lebanon, some squat 'blobs' of golden yew and a walled garden which had been used for potato production, but there were none of those features, like the Wild Flower Meadow and the Stumpery, for which the garden has become renowned.

No garden stands still but few can have changed as much as Highgrove since the Prince's arrival. An early project involved creating the Sundial Garden, where yew hedges were planted around the perimeter to provide shelter and structure and, within these confines, six beds made to provide a semi-formal appearance. The landscaping remains but the contents have changed over the years. Initially the beds were filled with plants that would produce a profusion of colour and smells. Ten years later the beds were edged with box and replanted with black and white plants. In the last year the garden has been replanted yet again, this time with plants of pink and purple hues.

One of the most awesome features of Highgrove is the way in which the Prince uses the garden to display the vast number of gifts he receives. Features like the Wall of Gifts give the place a unique feel whilst the placing of a collection of busts of the Prince in niches so that he can 'keep an eye on the visitors' are an indication of his sense of humour!



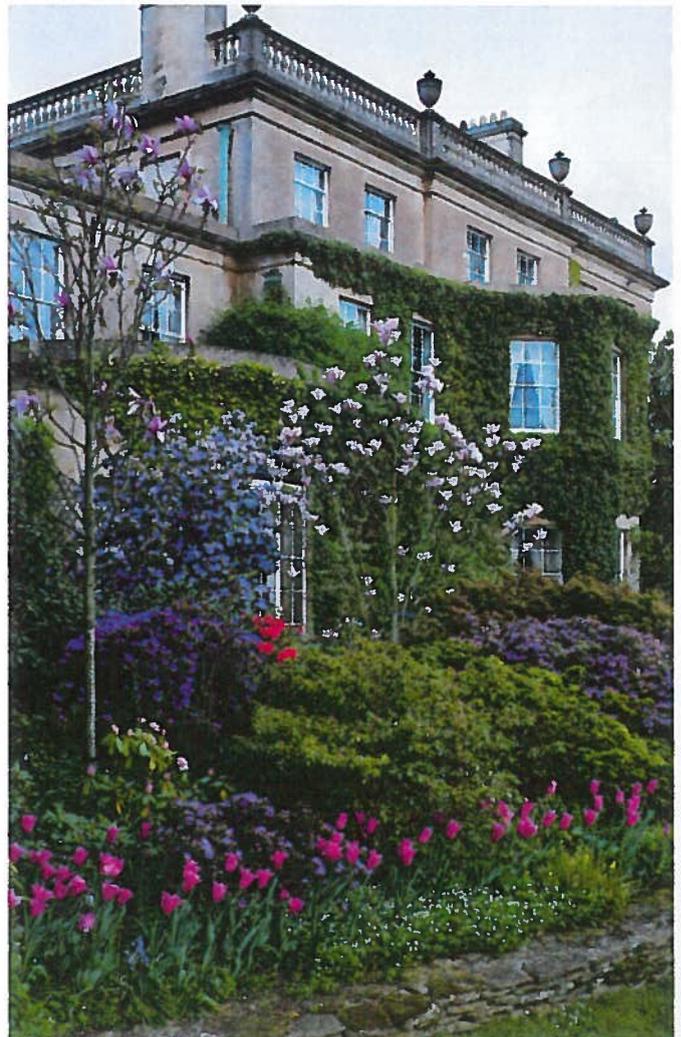
Also remarkable is the way in which those who have helped to create the garden are publicly acknowledged. In the words of one of the people who took part in the recent visit: 'When in the future Highgrove is spoken of as a historic garden, it will not be tied to the style of a particular design but seen as that of an eclectic patron with a myriad of designers, advisors and gardeners.'

Highgrove has not escaped the ravages of plant disease and death in the last twenty years but these are all acknowledged and action taken to move forward. Much of the *Buxus* was attacked by box blight and the Cedar of Lebanon that was hundreds of years old had to be felled a couple of years ago due to it becoming dangerous as it was slowly dying. The box has been replaced either with germander (*Teucrium x lucidrys*) or with a new planting scheme and, from what little remains of the Cedar, a remarkable oak pavilion with a spire has been created, together with a bird-feeding station of royal proportions.

Most of all, Highgrove is a place of inspiration: visitors leave thinking how they can adapt some aspect of what they have seen to their own garden. Often their thoughts are of where they might find an urn that would not disgrace the Prince's remarkable collection or a plant that has inspired them. However, the ideas are not always grand or expensive, as the words of one of the WHGT group indicate: 'I am amazed at how economical the Prince has been in so many ways. I've been wondering for ages what to use to make a terrace around my house. Today I've seen how old bricks and flat stones can be used to make the most wonderful surfaces. I'm off home to start using up some of the materials I'd thought of as rubbish until I visited Highgrove.'

*JEAN READER is Chairman of the South & Mid Glamorgan branch.*

*Entrance arrangements have changed enormously in the last 21 years. In the early days it took several years on the waiting list to be offered a visit and it was understood that a visit was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. All that has changed and, as well as being allowed to visit more than once, it is possible for individuals to visit, although they will still join a group for their garden tour. The garden is not open during the winter, but booking for 2011 opens in February. All details are available on the Highgrove website: [www.highgrovegardens.com](http://www.highgrovegardens.com)*



PHOTOGRAPHS: ANDREW LAWSON.

# GAZETTE

All branch activities are open to Trust members; prior booking may be necessary. Details and further information are available from branch contacts and the Trust's website, [www.whgt.org.uk](http://www.whgt.org.uk).

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## CEREDIGION

**12 March (2pm), Branch AGM**, Llanerchaeron, Aberaeron.  
Lecture: 'From County Clare to Ceredigion: A Gardening Career', by head gardener Kevin O'Donnell.

Opportunity to visit the walled gardens.

## CLWYD

**12 March (10.30am), Branch AGM**, 11.30am, lecture – 'Edward Kemp and his Parks', by Elizabeth Davey. Gladstone's Library, Hawarden

**11 June, Study Day** – Garden Archaeology and its Importance to the Garden Historian. Twn o'r Nant, Denbigh.

Booking forms from Elizabeth Bartlett, Leeswood Hall, Mold, Flintshire.

## WEST GLAMORGAN

**10 March (2pm), Branch AGM**, lecture – 'Japanese gardens' by Gerry Donovan, Project Manager, Dyffryn Gardens.

St Paul's Parish Centre, de la Beche Road, Sketty, Swansea. £3

**19 March, Evening fund-raiser**, Georgian Supper, to be held in Swansea.

Details to follow; limited availability of tickets.

**23 June (2pm), Self-drive trip** for guided tour of Penpont House & gardens, Brecon.

Mrs Davina Hogg will give us a talk and part tour of the gardens, which are Grade II\* listed.

£6.50 to include talk, tour, plus tea and cake.



Cyngor Cefn Gwlad Cymru  
Countryside Council for Wales



### The Welsh Historic Gardens Trust

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